

Kindly amend claims 1 and 15 as follows:

A1
1. (Amended) A nonwoven composite structure comprising: a plurality of layers of nonwoven fiber material wherein said layers of nonwoven fiber material comprise a plurality of fiber elements, said layers of nonwoven fiber material being bonded together by an adhesive extending in layered sandwiched relation substantially between said layers of nonwoven fiber material, said layers of nonwoven fiber material being further bonded together by the forced extension of fiber elements from one or more of said layers of nonwoven fiber material substantially across said adhesive such that mechanical entanglement is established between adjacent layers of said nonwoven fiber material.

A2
15. (Amended) A nonwoven composite structure comprising: a plurality of layers of nonwoven fiber material of needle punched construction comprising a plurality of intermingled staple fibers, said layers of nonwoven fiber material being bonded together by one or more layers of adhesive extending in substantially sandwiching relation between said layers of nonwoven fiber material, the nonwoven composite being characterized by a thickness of not less than about 6.3 mm and being further characterized by a density of not less than about 0.1 grams per cubic centimeter said layers of nonwoven fiber material being further bonded together by the forced extension of fiber elements substantially across at least a portion of said layers of adhesive such that mechanical entanglement is established between adjacent layers of said nonwoven fiber material.

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 were pending in the application. Claims 22 and 23 have been canceled. Independent claims 1 and 15 have been amended. No claims have been added. Thus, upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-21 are subject to continued examination.